

SBA HELPS A FAMILY BUSINESS SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Harrisburg, Pa – In 2001 Lance and Angela Ulen, owners of Hooper Memorial Home, wanted to move their nearly century-old, family-owned business. They found a new location, but knew the financing process would be a challenge. The Ulen's turned to the programs and services provided by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to prepare a business plan, secure a loan and expand their business.

The story of Hooper Memorial Home begins with Walter J. Hooper, Sr. In the early 1900's he began his funeral care career and founded Hooper Memorial Home on Forster Street. His wife Alice, his strongest supporter, was one of the city of Harrisburg's first African-American teachers. Hooper's daughter, Millicent Price Hooper, was interested in a music career and attended Temple University.

After her father's untimely death, Millicent decided to take over the family business and attended embalming school. In 1941, she became the youngest person to pass the State Board of Funeral Directors Examination and the first woman to obtain a funeral director's license in Dauphin County. Millicent was assisted in the family business by her brother Walter J. Hooper, Jr. and her uncle George Hooper.

To continue the family tradition at Hooper Memorial Home, Lance Ulen (Millicent's son), entered the business in 1976. Lance's compassionate nature and softer side have proven to be valuable assets in the funeral business. His wife, Angela Ulen is also involved with the business. She has an accounting background and in 1995 obtained a degree in Mortuary Science.

When Lance and Angela Ulen started to think about purchasing a new building, they contacted many financing agencies and reviewed



Lance & Angela Ulen

The Ulen's turned to the Kutztown Small Business Development Center (SBDC), where they took courses and revised their business plan. Partially funded by the SBA, the SBDC's are a network of university-based centers that provide free management, consulting and technical assistance to small business owners in a variety of areas. "We found that working with the SBA and SBDC was so encouraging," said Angela.

The Ulen's then used their new business plan to secure a commercial real estate loan under the SBA's 504 Certified Development Company Program. Susquehanna Economic Development Association-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) and Legacy Bank participated in the Ulen's 504 loan. They worked with Thomas Rall of SEDA-COG who was instrumental in guiding the Ulen's through the loan process. The SBA's 504 Loan Program provides growing businesses with long-term, fixed-rate financing for major fixed assets, such as land and buildings.

Thanks to the SBA, the Ulen's have been able to continue the family business. Sales have increased they are able to provide a greater range of services. The new location, at 3532 Walnut Street, includes seating capacity for more than 200 and parking to accommodate 100-plus cars. They also have added a casket selection room, conference room, flower display room and a children's play area. Angela Ulen said "When people ask us how we managed it all, we refer them to the SBA."